UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/Sub.2/2002/NGO/7
19 July 2002

ENGLISH ONLY

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on the Promotion
and Protection of Human Rights
Fifty-fourth session
Item 2 of the provisional agenda

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Written statement* submitted by France Libertés,
a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[3 July 2002]

*This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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An overview of the situation of the Human Rights violation in Iran

We will present some information about the violation of Human Rights in Iran, using information taken mainly from Iranian official media and press, the Report on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran to the 58 session of CHR, and the last report of the Special Reporter on violence against women.

1) Public executions

The number of announced executions since the beginning of 2002 - in six months - amounts to 200, indicating a 50 percent rise compared with the same period in 2001.

Among the victims have been two women who were sentenced to stoning to death. Seday-e Edalat daily reported on June 1 that a young woman by the name of Shahnaz was sentenced to death by stoning in Karaj (west of Tehran) . Official press (Khordad daily- June 20, 2002) reported another stoning sentence issued in Tehran for a 30-year-old woman called Ashraf. Four Iranian women - Shahnaz, Ferdows, Sima and Ashraf - languish in jail waiting to be stoned to death. The number of stoning sentences during the five years of Khatami's tenure has now reached 23. Sixteen of the victims have been women.

In his last Report on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran (E/CN4/2002/42), the Special Representative of the Commission on Human Rights, Mr. Maurice Danby Copithorne , underlined : "many of the punishments are gross violations of international human rights norms, including in particular the use of stoning".

The judiciary ordered the execution of Mohammad D. (Feranki), a former member of Iran's national wresting squad and the country's 1996 champion on charges of "waging war on God" on May 22.

The public affairs department of Tehran province's Justice Department announced on June 8 that six prisoners had been hanged in Tehran on charges of "hand-bag snatching." Seven others, including a woman, were sentenced to flogging and imprisonment on similar charges. (ISNA state-run news agency, June 8, 2002)

2) Savage punishments

Iranian cities have been scene of an unprecedented spate of savage punishments including amputation of fingers and legs as well as floggings that have been carried out in public mostly in the past two months.

The state-run newspapers in Tehran reported on May 8 that four prisoners, identified as Alireza N., Mohammad A., Sattar S., and Alireza Q., were sentenced to execution after receiving 75 lashes each. They were charged with "killing an officer of the State Security Forces. The same court ordered another prisoner's right hand and left foot to be amputated.

The state-owned daily, Kayhan, reported on May 7 that the right hands of two prisoners, identified as Babak Pilehvar and Hossein Rezamehvar, were amputated before large crowds in two separate locations in the southern city of Shiraz, Kazeroun Gate and Saadi Gate. "This was the first stage of the punishment and upon their recovery, their left legs will be amputated in public," the paper added.

These kinds of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishments have increased in recent months particularly in the case of women: the state-run daily Azad reported on May 29 that three women were sentenced to 100 lashes each, while two others were given 104 lashes in public in Tehran. The state-run daily, Seday-e Edalat, reported on June 30, that 13 women were flogged in the city of Qom. Among them were three pairs of sisters. They were each sentenced to 180 lashes.

3) violation of fundamental freedoms

Prof. M. Copithorne in his Report (E/CN4/2002/42) to the 58 session of CHR maintains : The treatment of intellectuals and dissidents, particularly by the security forces and the Judiciary, reveals a fearful intolerance of alternative views. The treatment of many of these persons is in violation of the Iranian Constitution and of generally accepted international standards, and in some cases is little short of vicious.

Completing this Report in his last statement to this session (2 April 2002), the Special Representative adds: powerful elite continues to use violence to confront those they deem to be enemies of the state or of religion. Activists can be kidnapped off the streets showing up months later in the custody of one of the many security agencies. Reports , including personal testimony, of the abuse of detainees continue to become public. These include long periods of solitary confinement, coerced confessions, disregard for medical condition of detainees, refusal of access for relatives and lawyers, as well commonly, of psychological torture, and from time to time ,of physical torture as well. There is a recent report that a journalist released on bail after a year in prison, was taken straight to hospital in a state of paralysis .

In her last report of Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Special Reporter on violence against women(E/CN4/2002/83/Add.1), mentioned : i It is reported that women prisoners are systematically subject to rape by judges and high-ranking official in prison. She adds: The Special Reporter remains concerned about violence against women in Iran and requests the Government to respond to the allegations of the use of sexual torture in Evin Prison, Teheran.

Since the above mentioned Report and statement the situation has seriously worsened . According to state-run newspapers, "strike units of State Security Forces" have launched a new crackdown on "depravity" among young people.

Thousands of young people have been arrested and subjected to brutal treatment by suppressive agents of the clerical regime since the beginning of July this year in a new wave of crackdown in Tehran and other towns and cities across Iran.

The judiciary in the southern Fars Province announced yesterday that more than 30 girls and boys were sentenced to flogging and imprisonment following security forces' raid on a birthday party for a 13-year-old girl. A 17-year-old girl, "a musician", "a singer", and "a cameraman" were sentenced to 74 lashes each and from one to two years of imprisonment. Twenty others were sentenced to 40 lashes and the rest received a suspended sentence of 40 lashes."

Some of the measures taken by the Iranians authorities in the new crackdown include introduction of "vice patrols" in the cities by Special Anti-riot Forces using brand new black Landcriusers to make arrests and conduct body search; brutal treatment of young people under the pretext of "purging trouble-makers" and "enhancing security;" carrying out urban exercises by suppressive security and Bassij forces; "invasion" of entire neighbourhood and vast areas of cities by security forces to conduct house-to-house search; conducting raids on private homes and arresting individuals for taking part in parties, or for having satellite dishes; increase in the number of check-points; harassment and persecution of girls and women for "inappropriate veiling" and harassing young people for excuses such as "listening to loud music."

The daily, Nowrouz (July 1 2002), acknowledged that "dozens of people are being arrested daily... in every neighbourhood." The daily warned: "Has one taken into consideration the hatred and vengefulness that such treatment creates in the hearts of young people?"

The official news agency, IRNA, reported on July 1: "A large number of citizens have contacted IRNA and said that people are being arrested by the patrols of the Special Unit of the State Security Forces and are being subjected to body search, while they have not committed any crime." The agency added: "Tehran residents have reported aggressive treatment of detainees in public by the Special Units of the security forces."

It is particularly in this context that the Special Representative in his last Report concluded that: Change is inevitable. Newspapers in Tehran quoted a high-rinking cleric, Ayatollah Ebrahim Amini, deputy head of the experts assembly, as saying " I swear to God that society is on the threshold of an explosion, people are deeply discontented and worried. If this continues the system will be under threat." (Reuters May 16 , 2002)

All of the signs indicate that the failure to ratify a resolution by the UN Human Rights Commission in April and a halt for monitoring human rights situation by the UN Special Representative have been contribute to further repression against the Iranian people.

Under these critical circumstances it is strongly necessary to raise this disturbing issue by introducing a substantive resolution at the forthcoming UN General Assembly. The resolution ought to condemn flagrant violation of human rights in Iran and should emphasise the need for resumption of UN Special Representative's monitoring of human rights situation in Iran.